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Letter dated 1 May 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to communicate to you the position of the Government of Burundi on the report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see annex).

The report contains grave distortions with respect to Burundi, since the gravity of its conclusions and recommendations is out of proportion to the single paragraph that accuses Burundi, without adducing any evidence and therefore wrongly.

The Government of Burundi categorically rejects the accusations contained in the report and requests the Security Council not to support those conclusions of the report that concern Burundi.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and the position of the Government of Burundi circulated to the members of the Security Council as documents of the Council.

(*Signed*) Marc **Nteturuye**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 1 May 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Position of the Government of the Republic of Burundi on the report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

27 April 2001

Following the publication of the report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Government of the Republic of Burundi would like to draw the attention of the Security Council to the following:

I. The report provides no tangible proof of the allegations against Burundi which it contains

1. The Government of Burundi is surprised to read in the report that Burundi is one of the group of countries that have invaded and occupied the Democratic Republic of the Congo and participate in the systematic pillage of its wealth. These are allegations without any foundation. Indeed, Burundi has serious reservations about the methodology used to collect and process information, particularly as it relates to the conduct of the investigation in time and space. It is important to note, for example, that, despite the Government's pledge to cooperate fully in the investigation, the Panel of Experts did not undertake its second mission to Burundi following the publication of its first report to the Security Council.

2. Regarding the links that exist between the exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth and the continuing conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi wishes to recall that it has always respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbours. During the Lusaka talks, it had an opportunity to explain the reasons for its presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which are: to ensure the security of its frontiers and continued navigation on Lake Tanganyika, an essential means of communication for a landlocked country. Burundi therefore did not go into the Democratic Republic of the Congo to occupy the country or to exploit its wealth. It was obliged to deploy a security force on the frontier in the wake of incursions by FDD and FNL troops and their allies, who established a rear base in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Since the central Government in Kinshasa had lost control of this area, Burundi found no governmental counterpart with which it could work to ensure the security of its borders, which was threatened by Burundian rebels, Interahamwe, ex-Far and Maï-Maï militia.

The Burundian security force is deployed in the Rusizi plain and on the shores of Lake Tanganyika in South Kivu and Nord-Katanga. To our knowledge, there are no mining or forestry exploitations or other forms of wealth that might have aroused temptations.

II. Of the 242 paragraphs contained in the report, the allegations against Burundi are contained only in the three sentences of paragraph 105

4. Paragraph 105 refers to an IMF office memorandum, according to which Burundi has been exporting minerals it does not produce, namely, gold, diamonds, columbo-tantalite, copper, cobalt and basic metals. We have sought without success to locate this document attributed to IMF.

5. However, according to a study of the mining sector commissioned by the World Bank and carried out in 1993, Burundi possesses a variety of minerals, including gold, nickel, tin and a number of industrial minerals. Regarding the exploitation of gold, the same study indicates that this sector currently employs between 2,000 and 3,000 artisans, who each year produce between 600 and 700 kgs (see table 1). Other reports by national mining companies give details of the periods of exploitation, the quantities produced and the export value in dollars of minerals such as cassiterite and columbo-tantalite (see table 2).

6. Burundi is also accused of mass-scale looting of bark from prunus Africana, coffee, minerals, wood, livestock and money, all of which are either transferred to the country or exported to international markets. It should be noted that there have always been transnational exchanges between Burundian population groups and those in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The capital, Bujumbura, is itself an important source of supply for the population groups of the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ores, such as gold, and diamonds are transported legally to the airport or to the port of Bujumbura on the way to foreign countries. Some of these products are sold directly on-site in Burundi, where several *comptoirs* run by nationals or foreigners have been set up. Table 4 shows the (decreasing) volume of Burundian imports from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

7. Moreover, Congolese population groups fleeing the war have taken refuge in Burundi with their property, including livestock and a number of mining products, which they sell. Mention should be made, in particular, of Congolese nationals belonging to the Banyamulenge tribe and other tribes related to it.

Table 1

Mineral	*Period*	*Production in kg*	*Export value (United States dollars)*
	1992	182 645	457 353
	1993	71 977	106 134
	1994	-	-
	1995	14 654	32 649
Cassiterite	1996	5 502	17 062
	1997	20 935	56 195
	1998	-	-
	1999	18 408	48 208
	2000	9 978	21 077
	Subtotal	**324 099**	**738 678**
	1992	8 527	136 432
	1993	45 911	824 971
	1994	29 166.4	441 065
	1995	42 167	675 999
Columbo-tantalite	1996	36 855.6	579 802
	1997	45 921.2	732 856
	1998	30 480	472 344
	1999	42 149	662 088
	2000	31 175	631 134
	Subtotal	**312 352.2**	**5 156 691**
	Total	**6 364 518.2**	**5 895 369**

Source: Study of the mining sector, Report No. 12378-BU of 27 December 1993, table 2: Medium-term mining sector development scenarios (5 to 10 years).

Table 2

	Cassiterite value (US$)	*Coltan value (US$)*	*Sales (US$)*
1992	457 353	136 432	593 785
1993	106 134	824 971	931 105
1994	-	441 065	441 105
1995	32 649	675 999	708 648
1996	17 062	579 802	596 864
1997	56 195	732 856	789 051
1998	-	472 344	472 344
1999	48 208	662 088	710 296
2000	21 077	631 134	652 211
Total	**738 678**	**5 156 691**	**5 895 369**

Source: COMIBU S.A. and its mining operations, Bujumbura, 11 April 2001.

III. Despite these glaring omissions, the report proposes sanctions against Burundi

8. In its paragraph 11, the report acknowledges that data are abundant for some countries and political movements, and scarce for others. Burundi is not mentioned in either group. Therefore, why should the same conclusions and proposals for sanctions be applied to it? The Government of Burundi finds such an amalgam unacceptable and such universalizing simplistic.

9. The Panel would do better to visit Burundi once again to hold discussions with the different departments. It would also be desirable for the Panel to visit the border areas and speak with the local people.

Prior to a real enquiry of this kind, it is unfair and premature to speak of reparations, compensation of the victims, and sanctions.

IV. Conclusion

10. The Government of Burundi categorically refutes the conclusions and recommendations in the report, for they are not based on tangible evidence.

11. Nevertheless, it remains willing to cooperate with the Panel in deepening the investigations.

12. The Government of Burundi reaffirms its good will concerning dialogue with the Congolese authorities and those of the subregion with a view to finding political solutions to the conflicts in the African Great Lakes and commencing cooperation for the reconstruction and development of the subregion.

13. In this context, the Government of Burundi will shortly submit to the Security Council proposals aimed at guaranteeing security on its border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and adapting the provisions of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement to the movements of the "coalesced negative forces" headed for new rear bases in order to carry on a total war in Burundi.

Bujumbura, 27 April 2001

Table 3
Statistics on mineral production in Burundi: gold, diamonds, copper, cobalt, zinc, cassiterite, manganese, uranium, coltan, colombite

Substances	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*
Gold						
Quantity (kg)	3 819	2 256	0	0	0	0
Value ($)	41 508 667	24 253 819	0	0	0	0
Cassiterite						
Quantity (kg)	14 654	5 502	20 935	0	18 408	4 706
Value ($)	32 649	17 062	56 195	0	48 208	10 591
Coltan						
Quantity (kg)	46 692	46 689	45 921.2	30 480	42 149	20 425
Value ($)	659 960	632 218	732 856	472 349	662 074	340 233.5

N.B. Small-scale gold exploitation occurs almost everywhere in the country, especially in the north-western part of Burundi. Owing to the crisis and the embargo against the country, recorded production has decreased almost to zero.

Cassiterite and colombo-tantalite are exploited in the northern and north-eastern parts of the country.

Source: COMIBU.

Table 4
Imports by country of origin
(in tons)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	1999 Janv-Déc.	2000 Janv-Déc.
I. EUROPE	88 951	25 647	25 040	31 957	19 960	19 960	25 636
1. Union Européenne	66 817	23 190	21 947	29 449	18 250	18 250	22 989
Belgique - Luxembourg	15 123	5 682	6 972	14 790	9 687	9 687	9 325
Rép. Féd. d'Allemagne	4 368	2 227	1 652	3 101	1 373	1 373	1 316
France	18 380	5 080	3 991	3 609	2 195	2 195	6 039
Royaume-Uni	8 880	302	259	1 084	480	480	882
Italie	5 579	2 915	1 818	2 194	2 287	2 287	2 981
Pays-Bas	17 081	6 530	6 672	4 041	1 305	1 305	1 554
Danemark	827	124	315	145	288	288	460
Irlande	6	43	42	33	17	17	52
Espagne	283	221	154	231	287	287	174
Grèce	11	7	19	33	28	28	29
Portugal	35	2	38	-	22	22	42
Autres pays de l'U.E.(1)	451	77	35	188	310	310	85
2. AUTRES	2 134	2 457	1 093	2 518	1 710	1 710	2 637
Suisse	1 157	69	98	363	85	85	145
Tchécoslovaquie	300	1 800	768	49	-	-	10
Russie	11	3	-	1	348	348	1 888
Roumanie	352	216	155	1 845	770	770	39
Yougoslavie	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
Autres pays d'Europe	312	367	72	470	509	509	774
II. ASIE	83 283	58 413	31 994	57 241	58 888	58 888	52 303
Japon	2 922	2 228	1 380	2 266	1 727	1 727	1 588
Iran	7 007	467	1 760	475	467	467	-
Rép. Pop. de Chine	7 211	2 628	1 068	3 725	2 589	2 589	4 435
Union Indienne	6 422	4 951	1 517	2 852	3 574	3 574	2 117
Corée du Sud	451	222	138	182	423	423	314
Hong-Kong	752	218	88	285	619	619	695
Corée du Nord	3	-	1	-	231	231	38
Taiwan	287	55	84	31	37	37	57
Bangladesh	591	88	304	469	486	486	123
Pakistan	984	433	74	1 388	462	462	1 067
Arabie Saoudite	49 656	42 178	20 752	39 327	40 300	40 300	32 482
Autres pays d'Asie	7 057	3 015	4 783	6 408	5 983	5 983	8 958
III. AFRIQUE	80 291	51 482	51 658	82 549	83 736	83 736	102 691
R.D.C.(2)	13 441	5 788	447	1 913	1 828	1 828	1 184
Tanzanie	20 542	9 591	5 802	11 186	20 148	20 148	48 889
Kenya	7 589	3 571	4 650	11 667	6 890	6 890	6 881
Djibouti	25	141	109	-	277	277	857
Rwanda	1 359	894	858	792	1 085	1 085	1 447
Ouganda					1 002	1 002	658
Zambie	28 794	21 470	27 149	40 988	30 647	30 647	35 989
Zimbabwe	8 880	2 466	4 054	2 321	1 858	1 858	1 587
Afrique du Sud	3 379	5 370	4 403	5 811	7 891	7 891	4 509
Autres pays d'Afrique	5 212	2 391	4 386	7 866	12 704	12 704	6 665
IV. AMERIQUE	31 249	5 427	820	1 755	1 244	1 244	1 913
Etats-Unis	30 850	4 906	668	1 078	791	791	1 411
Canada	369	433	24	169	198	198	397
Autres pays d'Amérique	30	88	98	510	255	255	105
V. OCEANIE	-	10	13	120	165	165	20
Australie	-	10	13	120	165	165	20
VI. DIVERS	431	50	2	572	275	275	5 086
TOTAL	273 115	139 029	107 527	174 204	162 276	162 276	187 589

(1) Including the data concerning imports from Austria and Sweden beginning in January 1995.
(2) République Démocratique du Congo.
Source: customs declarations.

Source: Monthly bulletin of the Bank of the Republic of Burundi.